

## Mississippi Air National Guard partners with Air Force for New Mission

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Air Force has partnered with the Mississippi Air National Guard and has announced the establishment of a temporary mission qualifying training detachment for the RC-12 aircraft at Key Field in Meridian, Miss., to help bolster the Department of Defense’s intelligence gathering capability in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The RC-12 aircraft is the Air Force’s new manned intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platform, providing near-real-time intelligence and reporting to commanders. So far about \$100 million has been obligated to bring up to seven RC-12 aircraft to the base starting in January of 2009.

This mission, designated Project Liberty, will train approximately 1,000 students over the next two years, providing a positive economic impact to the Meridian area, which expects to receive the Joint Cargo Aircraft mission.

The 186<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, currently stationed at Key Field, will become the Total Air Force’s mission qualification training center for this program, providing the manpower and facilities for the training unit. The 186th will train for its Federal wartime mission, operating the RC-12, while conducting Total Force mission qualification training.

“We are proud to fill this critical need and contribute to this vital element of the Global War on Terrorism which plays an essential role in Homeland Defense,” said Lt. Gen. Craig R. McKinley, Director of the Air National Guard.

“Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman and I are very proud that the 186<sup>th</sup> Refueling Wing was chosen for this very important mission,” said Governor

**Commented [JCH1]:** Okay. I’ve made some edits. Aside from those, I think there needs to be some MS flavor here, which we’ll get from MS PAO. There also should be something quoted from Sr. Air Force Leadership about the value and goodness of this mission decision.

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Haley Barbour. “This wing has shown success time after time because of the dedication and professionalism of its officers and Airmen.”

The Mississippi Air National Guard, Air Force and the National Guard Bureau are working closely to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

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